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ME, — AN' WAR GOIN' ON

Me,—An' War Goin' On

By
JOHN PALMER CUMMING

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1921

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Dedicated
To the Pals of Yesteryear

FOR WHOM EVERY LINE OF IT WAS WRITTEN
WITH NO THOUGHT OF FAME
LAURELS OR FORTUNE
IN THE GREAT BIG SHOW WHERE EMOTIONS
SWEPT US INTO COMRADESHIPS
THAT WILL NEVER
DIE

J. P. C.
Egypt, 1921

PREFACE

This book owes its appearance in print to the friends these verses have already made. The pleasant avocation of the author in compiling them, and the little thrill he will feel when the first bound copy is handed him will be his reward. His files are already filled with letters of appreciation.

He expects nothing more of its appearance than that of linking all of the old friends together and of giving their favorite verses a wider audience.

J. P. C.

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ME, — AN' WAR GOIN' ON

ME,—AN' WAR GOIN' ON

Me, — a-leadin' a column!
Me! — that women have loved!
Me, — a-leadin' a column o' Yanks, and tracin' Her name
in the Stars!
Me, — that ain't seen the purple hills before, all mixed
in the skies
With the gray dawn meltin' to azure there;
Me, — that ain't a poet, growin' poetic;
An' the flash o' the guns on the skyline;
An' red wine, — an' France, —
An' Me laughin', — an' War!
An' Slim Jim singin' a song!
An' a lop-eared mule a-kickin' a limber
An' axles, 'thout no grease, hollerin' Maggie at me!
Me, — a-leadin' a column —
An' War goin' on!

Mornin' comin'
An' Me a-leadin' a column
Along o' them from the College,
Along o' them from the streets,
An' them as had mothers 'at sp'iled 'em,
An' them as hadn't, —
All a lovin' names in the stars, —
An' Slim Jim singin' a song, —
An' folks to home watchin' 'em, too,
An' Maggie, that never had loved me, lovin' me now,
An' thinkin' and cryin' for Me!
For Me that loved Maggie, that never loved Me till
now, —
With War goin' on!

Mornin' comin'
An' Me a-leadin' a column, —
An' a town in the valley
'Round the bend in the road,
An' Ginger strainin' his neck
An' thinkin' o' Picket Lines, —
An' Me an' the rest o' them thinkin' o' Home,
An' Coney just startin' to close at Home, —
An' Maggie mashed in the crowd,
An' Me a-leadin' a column,
An' War goin' on!

Me that hollered for water
With a splinter of Hell in my side;
Me that have laid in the sun a-cursin' the beggars and stretchers
As looked like they'd never a-come;
Me that found God with the gas at my throat
An' raved like a madman for Maggie,
An' wanted a wooden cross over me!
Me, — an Slim Jim back o' me singin'
An' tracin' a name in the fade of the stars!

Me, knowin' that some'll be ridin' that's walkin', tonight,—
Knowin' that some'll never see Broadway again,
An' red wine,
An' Little Italy,
An' Maggies like mine, —
Me, a-murmurin' a prayer for Maggie,
An' stoppin' to laugh at Slim,
An' shoutin' " To the right o' the road for the swoy-zant-canze,"

Them baby French guns that raises such Hell up the line,
An' marchin', —
An' marchin' by night,
An' sleepin' by day,
An' France, —
An' Red Wine,
An' Me thinkin' o' Home,
Me, — a-leadin' a column, —
An' War goin'on!

UP WITH THE RATIONS

Hovering of darkness and coverlids of dawn, —
And you're Up with the Rations, where the boys have gone!
Creaking and crying the limbers rattle on, —
You're up with the rations, — but the roads are gone!

" Which is the road to take? "
" How many miles to make? "
Never a nerve to shake, —
On with the game!

Shriek of the whining shell,
Bursting with flares of Hell,
Lighting the road so well, —
Thank it the same!

Crooning of aeroplane, hovering o'er you, —
(Mind you, the Infantry made it before you!)

" Come, build this bridge again!
Cut through this field of grain!
Work and forget the rain!
Hustle those men! "

" Here, take this overcoat,
Cover that wounded blote,
Pull it around his throat,
He's kickin' in! "

How the mud oozes and clings to the ration cart,
Clinches the rims of the tires till they hold!
How the mules fret at the load when the wagons start,
Stretching their traces from lashes that scold!

" God! What a fierce barrage! "
" There goes a team at large! "
" Where is that transport, Sarge?—
Finding a hole? "

Never a chance to run for cover, —
This is the way he puts them over:

" Bring on that set o' spares!
Pull off them murdered mares!
Hitch on two other pairs! —
And fix that pole! "

" Now, one at a crack, as I give you the sign,
Dig into her ribs and shoot for the line,
Or find yourself drivin' a limber in Hell
And ball up my dope on the drops o' the shell! "

Close enough now for a shot from a gunner's nest
To warn you that Fritz is sniping out there, —
Close enough now for a whisper to give you rest
To last you awhile with never a care.

* * * * * * * * *

" Sir! Your rations are delivered! "

* * * * * * * * *

Oh, it's welcome to the dawn, lad,
When the night was long,
For here's an empty cart, lad,
That sings a lively song:

Who would be part of the transport on a far-flung battle-line,
With never a thrill of battle, with never a lip to whine?

But, oh, there's a song in a limber
That stirs to the blood, my lad,
And swinging along with the rations
Is never one half so bad, —
For the glare and the gleam of a starshell
And a teamster's gay "gid-dap"
Hold enough of the life of a soldier
For the blood of a nervy chap.
And a lad lives close to his God, my lad,
And, lo, his heart is true,
For it takes a person of parts, my lad,
To get the rations through.

FROM FRANCE

Oh, the road that led from your house back to mine,
Kind of dusty, waiting road,
Where the midnight fancies glowed,
And the song I whistled showed
I was young.
Then the song that leapt from my heart up to thine,
On that battered, lazy path, —
As a kind of aftermath
To the music of your laugh, —
Was unsung.

Though the years have flung their distance in between,
Here's a counterpart as true
Leading back to dreams of you
With the same old hopes I knew
When I dreamed;
For I trudge a road in Flanders quite as green,
Where the zephyrness of June
Makes the purple beeches croon
Till the whole world is atune
As it seemed.

There is just so much of comfort in a day,
And no matter where it be,
In the States or Normandy,
Dusks will woo as tenderly
From above.

* * * * * * * *

I can almost see you waiting, far away, —
Ah, then, let our hearts beguile,
While He spares us, we can smile,
We can wait and dream awhile,
We can love!

BEYOND THE HILLS OF FRANCE

If you but make the hill,
  You'll see the village street;
The old deserted mill;
  The tiled red roofs that meet
      the glare and make it dim;
The children with their faces at the window pane;
The crone that stirs not to the sight of troops again,
      And barns with billets under them,
      And straw to rest a weary limb,—
        If you drive on until
        You've made the hill.

If you but make the hill,
  You'll see the battle-line,—
The shrubs and grasses still;
  The towns upon the Rhine;
      the lands beyond the stream
That wait those conquered vandals and their empty peace;
And driving farther on till second breaths may cease,
      While starshells fail to gleam,
      You'll find some bits of dream,—
        If you drive on until
        You've made the hill.

If you but make the hill,
  You'll see the heights of Home;
You'll hear the little rill
  That laughs through friendly loam
      and whispers to the grain;
Then call of mocking bird and peckerwood will be
As when their charms were all your boyish minstrelsy,—

And, ah, the Lover's Lane
That calls two hearts again,
  If you drive on until
  You've made the hill.

Take the very blood within me,
Pour it in the carnaged gore,
It can be no more the noble
Than the gifts of those before.
Oh, the pain that waits beyond me
May be more than I can bear,
But the heart that throbs within me
Knows me eager for my share.

There was laughter where my pathway led in days of long ago,
And the coming generation, — they must find it even so;
There were schools that I attended, shaded groves in which to stroll,
And a just God dealt the measure by an old and ancient scroll;
There were garlands by the wayside with their fragrance all for me;
There were tender thoughts to woo me while my dreams were young and free;
There were tender loves to cheer me, wondrous hopes in hours of ease, —
To the coming generation we must leave a share of these!

Bring the shriek of battle 'round me,
Throw me headlong in the flame,
I may tremble, weaken, cower,
But I'll soldier just the same.
Spare me! God, I could not ask it
When the Cause is wholly Thine,
All I ask of Thee is Courage
And a goal beyond the line.

There were cities builded for me, there were comforts never few, —
And no threatening foreign tyrant shall make them less for you;
There was all a dreamer envied, all a dreamer craved,
And now a Freedom's Conquest calls that it be saved.
We shall go with glory silent, not one voice to cheer,
Not one friendly handclasp, not one falling tear;
We can lay on Freedom's Altar only that which Freedom gave,
Nor applause, nor tender partings will we need to keep us brave.

This is the song of the soldier,
Finding a voice in a pen,
Lost, perhaps, in the millions
Who champion the cause of men;
This is the heart of the soldier,
Wistful, longing and young
There at the stern of a transport
Wishing the song were sung, —
Watching his Liberty Goddess
Grow dim in the land behind
And knowing the tug at his heartstrings
Is meant for men of his kind.
These are the dreams of the soldier
Who prays he'll never forsake,
And such are the dreams of millions
Who yet follow in his wake.

OCTOBER IN THE LINES

'Tis seldom that the guns are silent where we are,
And yet, sometimes, they seem to pause for rest,
And when they do, my fancies wander just as far
As if it were October in our nest;
As if the nest were built as we had planned it then,
As if I shrugged my shoulders in the crowd,
Brushed off the dying leaf and hustled in
To find you humming, singing half-aloud
And weaving wisps of dreams before the fire, —
And waiting in our land of Heart's Desire.

Few are the evenings of the red October sun
That, dying out beyond the hills of France,
Can yield the beauties of another one
When Love and Lips and Autumn met by chance;
Few are the golden glows within the dreamer's eye
Not marred by splinters of the bursting shell
Where wild hyenas of the air shriek through the sky
So close they hiss one's name, and, nearer, tell
The buried sins of long ago, and then, —
Explode beyond, and miss — and leave us — Men!

Ah, Love, tonight the red October leaf is down,
A garb of fancy withered in the sun,
As if the soul within the oak had shed her gown
To clothe her figure with a sterner one.
So does your soldier throw aside the dreamer's skein
To be rewoven in some dusk with you,
For fancy will be sweeter when it comes again
And Love will know a cost to hold it true;
And thus he goes, as one who knows he will
Emerge a victor, — yet your dreamer still.

THE LITTLE SAM BROWNE

The little Sam Browne is covered with mold,
Its buckles of brass are green,
And the little lieutenant, he feels so old
As he fingers the belt unseen.
Time was when the little Sam Browne was new
And many a mademoiselle
Fingered the trinket like maidens do
And promised to love him well.

" Now, you be true till I come," he said,
And don't love any one else,
Then off he marched at the column's head
And little he thought of belts.
Yet hearts that go soaring on Cupid's stair
Must sooner or later come down,
For, while he dreamed of the maidens fair,
They dreamed of the little Sam Browne.

Ay, faithful the little Sam Browne will rust
There in its dingy room, —
Its leather all cracked and covered with dust, —
Waiting a trashman's doom,
While civvied the little lieutenant frowns
Over Love's empty brim,
For though they remember the little Sam Brownes
They've all forgotten him.

A TOAST BEFORE "GOING UP"

I hear a glass that tinkles, touching mine,
A fancy dances to my breast,
And drowns my lips in giddy, ruddy wine
Till Youth knows not of Placid Rest!

Oh, give me but the tinsel and the gauze,
A woman's kiss, a whispered sigh,
Some little bits of Love and Life, because
Tomorrow needs its men to die!

A SOLUTION

If every one that wrote a book
  About the bloomin' War
Would come across and buy a book
  As books are written for, —
Then all of them that wrote a book
  Would make at least one sale
And publishers would not go broke
  Nor writers land in jail.

C'EST LA GUERRE

I would I were through with the Army
And back there on Broadway again
With a pinch-back suit for the wearing
And swinging an imported cane,
Where the great white lights
And the open nights
Are waiting the men from the Aisne.

But could I be through with the Army
To wander old Broadway alone
While the cursing shriek of the shrapnel
Is teaching no man to condone,
While the wild, weird nights
And the signal lights
Can show me a task of my own.

Ah, sad enough days in the Army
Will come when we wander away
With a million roads for the taking
And never a laddie to stay,
When pals of these nights
Drift off in those lights
To age and to dream of today.

THE LAST TOAST

Goodbye to this blithe quaff of wine,
The last to pass these lips of mine;
To gay midinettes; estaminets;
To old châteaus and soldier days;
To comradeships and comrade hands
That did their bit in foreign lands;
To ribboned roads of stately elms
That brought us dreams of other realms;
To those that charged a franc too much
And those that never thought of such;
To billets, barns and muddy streets;
To purple hills and cool retreats;
To ivy on the old église;
To ten-franc slabs of thin Swiss Cheese;
To cute mam'selles in gay Paree,
(A soldier's dream that could not be);
It's not because we would forget,
For dreams may teach us some regret,
So lift the glass and drain it dry, —
It's not adieu, — but plain " Goodbye."

WAR LOVERS

Up around old Château-Thierry,
  Fère-en-Tardenois, the Vesle,
He could write as swell a letter
  As a guy would want to mail.

We were in the Argonne Forest
  And the gassy mustard air
Only made him more poetic
  In his letters over there.

How he'd paint a little cottage,
  Stick some roses in the yard, —
Dream about when it was over, —
  Tell how years seemed long and hard!

Now, the bloomin' war is over;
  Sure, his whole creation whirls
When he thinks about his landing
  Face to face with all those girls.

* * * * * * * * *

Ah, now, don't be worried, buddie,
  If you're in such a plight,
You won't have to make a landing
  In the middle of the night, —

For, I'll bet they're pretty nervous
  While they tremble thinkin' when
They'll have to start explainin'
  To so dog-goned many men!

TO SLIM JIM,—

Just him,
And the swing of his bamboo cane,
Sometimes "Stim,"
To the rest of them,
When he comes to their thoughts again.
Oh, his laugh was long
Like a lilt of song,
And many a maid in France
Took to the likes of his airy sway,
Laughed to his lips with her heart astray,
Sobbing a bit when he marched away
To thrill with the Soldier's Chance!

It's him
I'll remember when years grow dim,
For a wine cup's brim
Fit the smile of him
When he lifted his glass with the best of them.
I'd go anywhere
If going there
Could stir a bit of song,
Leaving the lights of these wild, gay nights,
Hiking again through a field of frights,
Aching and seeing the same old sights
To drink with Slim along.

NO MAN'S LAND

I was a proud and happy soldier
When I sailed for France, I know,
They used to talk to me, 'bout gals I'd see
And liquor everywhere I'd go.
They said that Paris was a city
Where they liked a soldier kid,
And I surely liked the Army,
But I'll tell you what they went and did:

(Chorus)
They laid a stretch of fields in front of me
An' they called it No Man's Land;
I knowed a better place I'd rather be
Kinder South of No Man's Land,
I slept in mud and tried to scratch
While the whizbangs sung to me
And in the grasses, oh, I dreamed of passes
And the lasses in Paree.
Then they dropped some bundles from the skies
Just as big as they could be,
And they splashed the mud into my eyes
Then they quit feedin' me.
Oh, they put some barbed wire up one night
Just to hold my temper if I tried to fight,
Oh, it was punk
It stunk, just like a skunk,
An' they called it No Man's Land.

AT THE DOUGHBOY RING

There's a ringside rope and a ringside row
And a scrap at the Cirque Paree,
And the Gallery gab from the Olive Drab
Gives a whoop for the referee;
But the crab at the slab who is keeping the tab
Is as grim as he used to be,
And the fever comes from the long ago
Like the voice of a pal to me.

They are real straight stuff from a neck of wood
In the good old U. S. A.,
And they shake their mitts like the scrappers could
In the time of a bygone day;
And the hood of one stood for a blow that was good,
And we're in for a finish fray;
And we stand afoot like the sportmen stood
When a heavy would reel and sway.
There's the stealth of a cat in their soldier feet,
And they're built like the brawny bear;
And their bodies are grimy with sweat and heat,
And their eyes are like coals that glare —
And they hammer and beat, and they rush up and meet,
And they break, but they're always there, —
And it's blood in the veins of a Homesick Pete
When a scrap's on the Bill of Fare.

WHEN THE ORDERS COME

There's a boat a-ridin' anchor
In the port of St. Nazaire,
And her bow's a-facin' Westward
For some good Atlantic air;
You can have my whole durned outfit
For I haven't got a care
When a boat's a-loadin' cargo
For a harbor over there.

They can have the French they taught me
As a bloomin' souvenir —
I know another language
That is sweeter to my ear;
They can have their watered cognac
And their old left-over beer,
For we've finished up the business
Till there ain't no liquor here.

There's a Goddess in a harbor
With a bugle at her lip
And she blows the notes of Recall
To a soldier laden ship,
And my buddie's over waitin'
With a bottle on his hip —
And he's got it all protected
If his happy foot should slip.

They can tell Marie Louisa
That I'm off to Sandy Hook
That the lovin' ways she taught me
Ain't so new to this old crook, —

That no seconds will be issued
And she needn't come to look,
'Cause the address ain't my address
That I scribbled in her book.

Oh, My Baby! I'm a-comin'
An' I'll strut the Avenue,
An' I'm just so happy, Honey,
That I don't know what to do;
Well, I'm ready for paradin'
For I've seen the Heinies through,
But I'll march at no attention
When I lay my eyes on you.

JUNE 13, 1919: THE FINAL EDITION OF THE A. E. F. NUMBER OF "THE STARS AND STRIPES"

When the last of troopin' transports
  Have split the marble foam
And you soldier sportsmen wander
  Through the sporting sheets at home,

Then you'll think of yellowed pages
  Where famous sporting names
Got their first limelight ambition
  In soldier sports and games.

The kiss the wind may bear will stir the tranquil leaf
And lay it softly on the mounds we made;
And we shall labor in the mart or bind the sheaf
The while her spirit guards their quiet glade.

And as the blood of them commingles with the soil,
Where hers and theirs have fed the rose its hue,
So will our own turn comrade with a waiting toil
That needs our all to prove us worthy, too.

HEROES

There's some things that's sure to linger
In this memory of mine,
So that when one points a finger
Sayin', " I was up the line! "
I can say to him, " By blazes,
There's a pal of mine in France,
An' he's pushin' up the daisies
Where we made our last advance.

" Yep, he had his share of Argonne
An' a double dose o' mud,
An' he's pulled his last of jargon
'Bout the corned beef and the spud.
But he never pulls no prattle
Like some other fellows pull
With about three words of battle
An' the rest a line of bull.

" He ain't sittin' there a-pawnin'
All his soul for braver lies,
That'll keep the kids a-yawnin'
With the sandman at their eyes —
Nope, he's layin' at attention,
Done his last old hero strut,
But I think The Book'll mention
That he keeps his jawbones shut."

DAYBREAK AT LA VALBONNE

Dawn after dawn has come from o'er the distant crests
  Of yonder rugged lines that are the Alps, and I
Have watched the molten gold in opalescent nests
  Of grandeur there, — and softer moonlight gliding by.

Nor yet in all the sky is there a cloud so meek
  In cumulous bepillowed strands that can compare
Its purity with those white snows upon the peak
  That furtively aloof holds high dominion there.

And in those dawns I have seen cities miles away
  So lying that the drowsy mists of morning still
Enwrapped them in a darkened slumber while the day
  Outlined the silhouettes beyond the nearer hill.

Then with a flare that throws a shaft of lurid glow
  Before it, comes the first red brilliance of the sun,
And dim mists seem to melt into an orange flow
  Of sunlight, while the new dew drips where beams
    are spun.

It seemed the very soul forgot the molded clay
  That soon will warp in Life's small span of Care,
And in its wilder exultation tried to say,
  " In some beyond I'll know the secret wonders there."

Seemed like this Christmas mornin'
  My thoughts went o'er the foam
To fumble in a stockin'
  A-hangin' there at home;
Seemed like I seen the ashes
  Still smould'rin' in the grate
Where embers painted pictures
  For kids that couldn't wait.

Seemed like I seen the snowdrifts
  All heaped about the lawn
An' shivered in the breeches
  That I was puttin' on;
An' then I heard the children
  That barefoot down the street
Came runnin' for the good things
  I allus got to eat.

Seemed like I seen a mother
  Whose Santa Claus no more
A-lookin' at some hos'ry
  She'd hung the night before,
An' one's a-hangin' empty
  Till a great big shinin' tear
Drops in that empty stockin'
  For her soldier over here.

Then I walk into the village,
  Down here at La Valbonne,
An' I never had no money
  To buy a thing my own,

An' I never had no package
And didn't get no mail,
An' I couldn't see no sunshine
A-fallin' in my trail.

Then I knowed that Christmas givin'
Was what I missed the wust
An' that longin' feelin' got me
Until I thought I'd bust;
For I hadn't sent no package
With a German souvenir
To say I felt the spirit
Of the Christmas over here.

An' then, — I seen some Frenchies
So happy in a home
That hadn't had no Christmas
Until we had crossed the foam;
Then I knowed the whole creation
Back there in towns we lef'
Was happy with a present
From the whole durned A. E. F.

IN PARTING

Ah, France, we go, but will not soon forget
The verdure of the hills we roamed with you;
Some stronger bond beneath your flowers will yet
Beholding charms to keep the friendship true.

Some flush of youthful cheek, some sterner tear,
Some heartaches that were shared awhile with you —
These hold the brotherhood you gave us here
More sacred than a soldier's weak adieu.

Ah, France, your verdure fields will always bring
A softer hue to rose and violet,
The which will lend a subtle charm to cling
For each of us till neither can forget.

HOMEWARD BOUND

Song of the wonder wind, wooing me home,
    Whirling the blues and the greens of the sea,
Mixing a marble that melts to a foam,
    Have you a word to be whispered to me?

" She is pressing a kiss in the dewdrop's breath
    In the heart of a rose for you,
That is longing to bleed 'neath a hero's foot
    When the soldiers are marching through."

FROM FRANCE

When I am home again
  I'll build an open grate,
And in the joyous pain
  Of dreams that linger late,
I shall be back in France.
  For I am one that loved her lengthy lanes,
The wanderings of Chance,
  The maidens by her roadside and the trains
Of camions along the lime-pressed roads
That groaned at lifting hills and leaden loads,
  And at my grate with fantasy aglow,
  How sweet 'twill be for you to know
    The France I love.

But I am not at home again,
  There is no open grate,
And longing breaths of empty pain
  That years necessitate
Until I am at home.
  Yes, I am one that loved the bended elms
Where Corot turned the loam
  To leafy dells that whispered realms
On realms of rest and quiet, tranquil dream;
But I am still in France, and things can't seem
  As I will have them then before my grate
  With you beside me listening as I prate
    The France I love.

IN THE AFTERMATH

May Life give us no fame to go down in a book
  Where the eyes of the worldly shall read
Of the years that we lived or the paths that we took
  Or the lessons the Youthful should heed;
For the life of the heart is the book it would be
  With its aches and its fancies unsaid,
And the readers would think as they opened to see
  It was written of them instead.

TROUBLE

There ain't no troubles under the sun
But what I've had 'em, every one;
Sicknesses have come and went, —
Money earned was money spent, —
Girls I love have flung me down,
Them I don't still hang around, —
But I reckon, when I'm through
I'll have grinned as much as you.

THE PALS OF YESTERYEAR

Last night I sat in fancy with the pals of yesteryear,
For many flickering flights of flame had brought their spirits near,
And in the haze of cigarette, while embers fought the glow,
A fitting memory set the scenes of days of long ago.

They lie beneath the sod of France; they course some distant foam;
They wander o'er the empty years and, longing, dream of home;
They toil in field or factory, or, morbid, wan and blue,
They quaff the cup of La Bohême as those who dream will do.
And yet, they entered in, a crew of happy chaps,
Their pilgrimage forgotten in the time that overlaps;
And they were welcome guests, no hearth could e'er disown
Who told the tale that comrades tell when comrades are alone.

* * * * * * * * *

Tonight I am a distance from the pals of yesteryear —
I wonder if their spirits call each other spirit near;
I wonder if they try to cling to memory's lengthened chain
That grows so heavy with a weight that drags me back again!

CHRISTMAS OVER THERE

I wonder how they're spending their Christmas over there,
Without a khaki soldier to remind them of a care;
With no one standing guard beside the old estaminet,
And none to kid the kids along, still happy as they play.

I suppose the madame's soufflet that teased the lazy flames
Is hanging where it used to when she taught us Frenchy names;
The pets are purring softly and the oilclothed table there
Is waiting for the guests to come and leave the dishes bare.

The padre's holding Christmas mass; the road is lined with teams,
A crispy snow is sparkling in the wintry sunny gleams;
And Jeannette, Marie and our Louise are dressed in gay array,
A-teasing peasant laddies in an old familiar way.

There must be some happy orphans whose parrains don't forget
About the checks they promised that some are sending yet,
But if Fate should send me back again across the sea apace,
I think I'd choke with loneliness, completely out of place;

For, it's a happy Christmas they're having over there,
With everybody working for a France without a care,
With everybody shouldering the tasks that Peace has made,
With laughter mingling in the fields where we were on parade.

So, it doesn't make much difference if they never think of
me
As long as there are smiling lips to fit a cup of tea,
As long as there are embers to paint a rosy glow
And they can have a Christmas like the ones of long ago.

THE DEFEATED PACT

We thought that it was finished when we laid our rifles down,
When the bunting and the music gave the Olive Drab the town;
We thought that we had planted in the corner of the heart
A little share of glory in which all had had a part.

But, now we know we didn't, and we know the fight's before,
A fight that calls for courage and a fight that needs us more, —
A fight for all we stood for in the slimy, dirty ooze, —
For there never was a conquest a Yankee lad could lose.

We've kinder hallowed horrors that we thought were best forgot,
And we've thrown a little sunshine where sunshine never got, —
But, now, we'd better tell them, better open up the heart,
Better take the stump if needs be and give the wheels a start.

When they make a scrap of paper of what we wrote in blood,
It's time for showing mettle if the others sling their mud;
They've called it idle dreaming, — get your facts down and rebut,
And speak a double mouthful for the lads whose mouths are shut.

There's no Sunday-coated tourist can stand where we have stood
And ever feel the horrors that we felt in any wood,—
There's a bullet bitten crevice; but had they heard the hiss
They wouldn't lend their sanction to the votes that hand us this!

It's the thing we know we fought for, every nation hand in hand,
It's the thing that kept us going when we didn't understand;—
So, take the stump if needs be and show what you can do,
And spare no courage in you to see that Treaty through.

L'AUTOMNE

When November comes to the France we knew
And the fluttering leaf comes down,
Methinks, it is tinged with the khaki, too,
As it garbs the withering brown;
And there's something there in the hallowed hue
That will grip the heart when a leaf or two
Comes idly fluttering down.

YOU TELL 'IM

Will you me the kindness do today
  This morning and inform
The connaissance of Billie Lay
  Who was in uniform?
He was si tall, si débonnaire,
  Si joli and si grand;
He wore the hat the M. P.'s wear
  With red the little band.

He wore the gay, the jolly homme,
  Who at me promised things;
But Christmas gone, and he no come
  And nothing he not brings,
He is not come, he is yet there,
  These sadness I relate.
He was si tall, si débonnaire
  And what you call first straight.

If him you know not at his name,
  And yet he pass along;
You tell him n'est-ce pas the same
  Cylette has waited long.
He were si tall, si débonnaire
  You connaître him quick you meet,
You tell him if he over there
  Cylette still his complete.

THE SCATTERED ARMY

I wonder where the army is,—
  The one I used to know,—
The guy that found a gal of his
  At every place we'd go,
The chap that swapped his army clothes
  To get a dozen eggs,
An' that lengthy, lazy feller
  With the arbitrerry legs!

I wonder where the mule is at
  That Jimmy kep' in trim
By groomin' with his campaign hat
  An'— What's become of him!
An' where's " the top " and Slippery Sam
  An' other fellers now,
The guy that et the Colonel's jam
  An' him that cooked the chow!

An' where is Shorty Jones, today
  That sung them lovin' chants
About his gal so far away
  When we was there in France?
Oh, there's a lot of uniforms
  Still scattered on the street,
But I never see a buddie's face
  In any that I meet.

I s'pose that Ikey Epstein's got
  Each feller's last address,—
He'd send 'em to me like as not
  If I should write, I guess,—

But Ikey was the chap that lent
  Some bokoo francs or so
An' most of us can't write to him
  'Thout payin' what we owe.

EB'S FRENCH WIFE

I reckon there is some that loved the lights of old Paree,
Though laughter on its gilded streets could not appeal
to me;
I reckon there is some that think while at their daily toil
They'd like another glimpse of what was once a sacred
soil.

Then, if they is, they ought to know the hero that I write,
The one that's livin' in the house I'm passin' ev'ry night;
For others never know'd it and she'd never let it out
That she's a kind of hero that we never thought about.

They say that she's a-tryin' hard to learn a lot of things,
To wash the clothes an' sweep the house an' cook the stuff
he brings,
To learn to talk like we folks talk an' act like we folks do,
An' be a better help to Eb than any that he knew.

So, in the evenin's when I pass their simple little place
I'm glad to see a pretty smile a-ling'rin' on her face,
When she's a-standin' at the door just like as if she know'd
The time is here for Eb to come a-whistlin' down the road.

An' yet when he's a-strippin' fodder, workin' all the day,
She does a lot of sobbin', so the nearest neighbors say,
Fer some have come fer miles and miles to kinder comfort
her
An' none of them can understand just what she's cryin'
fer.

It's me that knows she's dreamin' 'bout the lights along
the Seine
An' Bois Bologney gardens ther that she won't see again,
An' sometimes she's a longin' for the Maries an' Lucettes
An' friends that loves the hardest an' most easily forgets.

Oh, I reckon there is some that loved the lights of old
Paree,
Although laughter on its gilded streets could not appeal
to me;
But I reckon she is one that loves the man she loves still
more,
An' she'd say " yes " to him again, just like she did before.

FIRELIGHT AND SHADDERS

A Sequel to ME,— AN' WAR GOIN' ON

Me! A-stretchin' my legs
An' yawnin' at home!
Me, a-stretchin' my legs at the firelight
An' watchin' the shadders an' flames!
Seems like I see the hills again,
An' tiny little towns,
An' here an' there a streak a-crawlin'
An' crawlin' an' crawlin'
On a log of wood,
Just like a caravan of olive drab!

It's funny what a feller sees
When he's stretchin' his legs
An' watchin' the shadders
Mixed in them flames!

Seems like I see
That column
With the Capt'n there,
An' hear them wagons rattlin' over them hills,—
An' Lee's a-holdin' the pots an' pans
That keep a-fallin' off the rollin' kitchen,
An' Slim Jim a-stealin' the cooks' own doughnuts,
An' somebody hollerin' " Fritz is up "
Just to see Jake hang a bucket over his head!
It's funny just how plain it is
When I'm stretchin' my legs
An' watchin' them shadders
Mixed in the flames!

Seems like when them embers pop
An' splutter out on Maggie's new carpets,
An' the mattin' on the floor, —
Seems like there's a war goin' on
Right there in that big ol' grate!
Land sakes, —
Slim a-lammin' a hand grenade
An' dodgin' down just in time,
An' a skirmish line scattered all over the hill,
An' them big boys bustin' right at 'em,
An' them little spots of khaki still goin' on when the smoke's gone,
An' here an' there a little lump of olive drab,
Not many of 'em, —
Jes' here an' there!

A new hunk of wood,
With little hitches of snow in its cracks,
An' it crackles like Louie used to laugh,
An' my shavin' water splutt'rin' in the can
That looks like we was boilin' coffee again.
Seems like I smell that corn and them green peas
That was stole from the sergeant's mess,
An' its four-off and two-on,
In the four-off part of the night,
With pots a-goin'
An' rumors,
Somewhere up in the little villages,
An' laffter,
An' snowin' outside,
An' talkin' 'bout what we've been through
An' the French girl next door bein' woke up in the night
To sell some of her ma's milk,

An' little Fitz sayin' he don't never want to go home,
An' Big Jim bustin' the door down
After he's come in from pass,
An' bein' put to bed gentle,
An' the February winds hissin'
An' spittin' sleet on the windows,
An' Me, a-stretchin' my legs
An' watchin' them flames.

I reckon,
There's a whole War
An' its heartaches in a log fire;
Seems like I understand pa's quietness more now,
An' Maggie, —
Well, I don't know as she'll ever understand
Just why I'm sittin' here, —
She never could see nothin' but lovin' an' romance
In a fireplace, —
An' there ain't nobody knows
But the little pot,
An' them logs,
An' them embers!
— When I'm stretchin' my legs,
An' thinkin'
An' watchin'
The firelight
An' them shadders.

THIRTY

The reporters mark the finish of a story
With a thirty on the sheet that ends a tale,
And on Venus, well, they call it a dimension
Of something, . . . I've forgotten where she's frail;

And they tell me it's an age when all the ladies
Stop and shiver just to think of all alone,
So, they powder up their faces where the fade is
And they wonder where the men are they have known.

From my childhood, I was taught to think of thirty
As the time declining years and age began,
So I fell for Mary Schooldays, but her flirty
Mother answered, " She's too young for you, — Old Man! "

So when Mary passed her thirty and was older
Well, I took some pity on her, yes, I did,
" Won't you marry me? " I whispered, getting bolder,
And she shivered, " Horrors, Jimmy, you're a kid! "

You can call it a dimension if you want to,
Say that women corner fellows all they can,
But don't let the age of thirty ever haunt you
It is just a part of childhood in a man!

THE STENOGRAPHER

If you can hold the job and learn to like it,
And swallow lots of things to get your speed;
If you can see each little key and strike it
And make them sizzle into words they need;
If you will never leave a covered letter
Or leave a musty spot upon the white,
And with your speed grow even neater, better,
And take a pride in all the things you write;

If you can speed and not make speed your master,
Or slowing down, do better work by that;
If you can conquer all your dreams of " faster,"
And strike each letter full and flat;
If you can see a bit of wonder work completed,
And take a bit of pride in all you've done,
And see it marked and penciled and depleted,
And know you must rewrite it as you run;

If initials of your name are on your papers
Where all will learn to know you as they read,
And there's something in the trademark of your capers
While years have added neatness to your speed;
If you can see the ribbon streaming, streaming,
Beneath the keys that raise ambition's haunch,
It won't be long before your work and dreaming
Will make life broader than the keys you punch.

THE CALL OF THE BETTER SELF

If I would make you richer far than dreams
  E'er told you in their wild illusive spread,
I'd lead you off in solitude, where beams
  No idle fantasy that Care is dead.
I'd lead you to a spot your laughing muse
  Has never known and place within your hand
Rare gems from which I'd will that you must choose
  Not all, but only one, and lo, you'd stand
Like one the world calls " fool," and ask me, " Who
  Are you to bring the talents of my Youth? "
I am your friend, your all, yourself still true;
  Though dormant I have seemed, I know the truth,
For you were sleeping, too. Awake, for I
  Am what you thought was Care, and fearing ran
To hide behind indulgences that lie
  In wait for you whom I would make a man.

AN EPISODE

He has come back, —
He, whose cup was brimming over
With its dreams and love!
He has come back to Her!

* * * * * * * *

How fervently their pens had scrawled the passion!
How eagerly their lips had met again!

* * * * * * * *

They were together,
Yet, they sat apart,
Each thinking of something missing
In the other's heart.

* * * * * * * *

He has gone because she does not love him;
She has let him go because he loves no more.

* * * * * * * *

For ages they will sit apart
Just dreaming things,
Dreaming of Junes, —
Junes that cannot come again.
It is so strange to them, —
This distance just across the street,
Just from today to yesterday, —
From June to June,
It is so strange to them!

MONOPOLISTIC FANCIES

I'd like to be the guy that gets
  The early morning mail
That brings the stuff the printer sets
  That gets the writer's kale;

I'd plagiarize and plagiarize;
  I'd write a book a day;
I'd hire a lot of other guys
  To print the stuff I'd say;

I'd open up a corner stand
  And fill up every shelf,
And if no customers should land
  I'd read them all myself.

AFTERMATH

There are so many sacred memories broken
By those who did not know quite all we gave,
There is so much so very lightly spoken
That it is sometimes hard to be yet grave.

There was so much we gave but for forgetting,
So much that youthful hearts were filled with them,
That we are sad to go along regretting
The paths that teach the narrowness of men.

But there is much to live until tomorrow,
And many things to crumble into clay,
And, so, the heart that felt its soldier sorrow
Knows better when to sadden or be gay.

When I got back to my Nellie
And said, " It's all over and done,
And the last Fritz in the Argonne
Has shouldered his baggage and run."

D'ye think another guy's story,
Three times more heroic than mine,
Could take one-half of the glory
That Nellie could make so divine?

D'ye think that taking positions
And rising one's life in a stunt
Is equal to issuing ordnance
About 40 miles from the front?

D'ye think that opening boxes
And writing out forms in a book
Wasn't heroic and noble
Compared to the hills they took?

Well, you should a-heard my Nellie,
When I came with a hero's grin —
" Listen, Josephus, I'm working,
And when are you gonna begin? "

BURNT FINGERS

This Love is but a woman's game
With tricks to help her win it,
And he who will may find it tame
With all her systems in it.

But, oh, the man who finds the rule
Though women don't discern it,
He drowns within a siren's pool
And loses love to learn it.

LILAC TIME

When it's lilac time in Paris
  There is jasmine at her door,
With a fragrance to embarrass
  All one's courage as before.

But who thinks of Paris flowers
  With the jasmine at her door, —
With two lovers' moonlit hours
  And her door in Baltimore?

SPRING'S USUAL

Ah, oui,
'Tis Spring!
And poets sing, ah, oui, they sing
And sing like everything.

Of peckerwood, of rippling brook,
Of summer girls, an open book,
Of long sweet sighs some lady took,
Of these, ah, oui, we read in Spring!

But do not write a poem now,
Oh, No!
You couldn't sell it anyhow,
Ah, no, alas, ah, no!

For, oh, the secrets verse could tell
Beneath crude lines of doggerel,
Beneath the spots where raptures swell
Where once the softer accents fell
So helter-skelter and pell-mell!

For while your careworn thoughts disperse
And seek some lines like these, or worse,
In which to let your soul emerse,
The poets bite their pens, or curse,
And think new thoughts for Christmas verse,
To fill a fast depleting purse,
Ah, oui, a fast depleting purse.

L'ENVOI

The nights we spent
Where the Boche flares lent
Their red to the moonlit sky,
Are now forgot
And another spot
Is luring our footsteps nigh;
The hard heart thrills
For the rookie drills
Are things of a soldier past,
And gleams of home
From across the foam
Are calling us all at last.

When rifles rust
And the dingy dust
Collects on the I. D. R.
Our thoughts will grope
For the periscope
With visions of fields afar,
Of parts we played,
And of pals we made,
That drift through a golden dream
That waits beyond
In the halcyon
Where memory reigns supreme.

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